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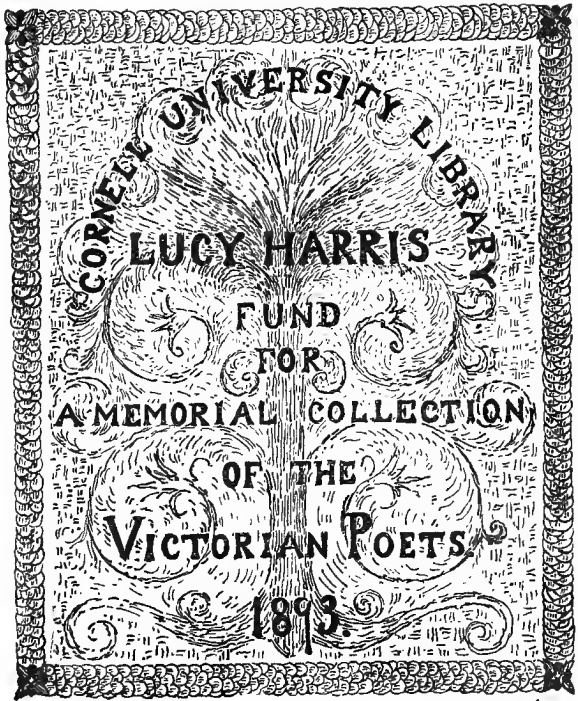

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THE SEASON.

Slender.—Why do your dogs bark so? be there bears i' th' Town?

Anne Page.—I think there are, Sir! I heard them talked of.

Slender.—I love the sport well; . . . but the women have so cried and shrieked at it, that it passed.

Merry Wives of Windsor.

THE SEASON:

A SATIRE.

BY

ALFRED AUSTIN,
AUTHOR OF "THE HUMAN TRAGEDY," "AN ARTIST'S PROOF," ETC.

NEW AND REVISED EDITION.
(Being the Third.)

LONDON:
JOHN CAMDEN HOTTEN, 74 & 75 PICCADILLY.
1869.

A.129565

DEDICATION PREFIXED TO THE SECOND EDITION.

To the

Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli, M.P.

by one

who reveres his genius

and

exults in his success,

This Book

is, with permission,

dedicated.

June, 1861

PREFACE TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

IT is now more than nine years since the author conceived the plan of "The Season," and more than eight since it was first published. It passed rapidly through two editions, and has since remained out of print.

Two considerations have decided him to permit of its republication. The first is, that during those eight years there has been a constant demand for it.* The second is, that whilst the

* He has also been requested to sanction its translation into French verse. That, he conceives, would be

social follies—to use here no harsher term—glanced at in its verse have increased rather than abated, there at present prevails a disposition to canvass them with frankness, which scarcely existed at the date of its original appearance.

But there still remained a grave question for him to determine. Was he to republish the satire, exactly as it stood eight years ago, or was he to recast it entirely? There were serious objections to either course. Adopting the former, he might naturally enough be supposed to be perfectly satisfied with it. Fixing

no easy matter With what felicity it may be rendered into French prose has been shown by M. Forgues, in his article on the author's works in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Sept. 15, 1865

on the latter, it might be presumed that he was dissatisfied with it altogether. Neither conclusion would have represented his feelings on the ubject.

He has accordingly pursued a middle course. The poem now presented afresh to the public is substantially the same poem as that which was published in 1861 ; but those who care to compare it with the first or second edition, will perceive that the author has expunged a considerable amount of old matter, and introduced a considerable amount of new. He begs, however, to add that, even as he has now left it, it seems to him in certain passages still to require qualification, and in several passages to be far from expressing his full mind. He was induced

to desist from further tampering with it by the friendly reminder that too scrupulous alterations might almost wholly obliterate the original text, whilst at the end of another eight years those alterations might just as little content him as the original text contents him now.

So much by way of showing that he is neither obstinately attached to the language or drift of a composition, simply because it happens to have been his, nor indolently averse from the *labor limæ*, which assuredly was not spared on its inception. But, having protected himself, he trusts, against either imputation, he feels himself more at liberty to add that, speaking generally of those things which compose the diversions of the Season, what he then

thought frivolous he now equally thinks frivolous, and what he once regarded as mischievous he now more than ever regards as mischievous. Indeed, it is the seemingly semi-tolerant levity of his satire, and not what some people have called its severity, with which he is most disposed to quarrel. "No youth can be a master," says Goethe; and the author of "The Season" was, nine years ago, not much more than a youth. It does not follow that even an advance in years has brought with it a capacity for ethical teaching, especially in the arduous region of satiric verse; but if, as is not improbable, the author should ere long attempt to deal once more with the proclivities of the age, in the form and metre most familiar to him, it

is quite certain that he will not be able to be less censorious than formerly. He fears the Muse will be equally severe; only the seriousness of her intention will be made more obvious.

May 1869.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE first words of my Preface shall be a frank acknowledgment that "The Season" has been treated, on the whole, with a toleration more liberal than I anticipated. The usages of speech being now such as they are, it could have escaped censure only by escaping notice. The latter I was anxious that it should receive, or I should not have published it: that I was therefore prepared to accept the former, may be inferred.

It has been said in the press, by a critic severe but pleasant, that I do not "pretend to be very desperately in earnest." I would assure this courteous gentlemen, and all those whose suspicions he may have interpreted, that they unintentionally do me grievous wrong. The "something in the world amiss" which easy-going folks console themselves by imagining "will be unriddled by and by," I would alter if I could, at once; and though, so far, I have felt myself unable to assist in its alteration further than by calling attention to its existence, to this incipient but surely necessary portion of the task I will unaffectedly say that I did feel myself not altogether unequal.

But how was I to make people consider

what I believed to be the fact—that the well-dressed drones of society, assisted by the at times no less splendidly caparisoned honey-bees of the 'Change and the Forum, occupy themselves with pastimes not ennobling to the initiated, and neither edifying nor encouraging to outsiders? The world has become so large, so noisy, and so indifferent, that he who first addresses it in a whisper has not the smallest chance of being heard. Of this convinced, I addressed it in tinted paper, attractive frontispiece, Magenta binding, and language loud, strong, and insolent. That I am addressing it again so soon (and now, I trust, with more of gentleness), proves, at least, that my method of gaining its ear was not ill-devised. I knew well

enough that no other method would avail ; that no modest apparition in print, no sleek sentences, no orthodox tropes, no polished reproaches, would wake from their drowsy Sabbath disregard, or startle from their week-day *feux-de-joie* the well-to-do optimists who, not seeing their way to making themselves or their neighbours any better, seek their consolation in making both ineffably worse. I saw, or thought I saw, that the company of the world, which the wisest authority has pronounced to be a stage, and which I will presume to add, is a stage essentially dramatic and sad with pathos, has assumed the attitudes and costume of the ballet, with gauze somewhat more maliciously arranged ; and I was ambitious to re-

mind them that, in spite of warm approval from the young, and more cautious though perhaps not more frigid countenance from the old, life is a very "serious business" after all. A comic side it has, no doubt; and occasionally, though seldom surely, its aspect is somewhat farcical. But never, I most solemnly believe, does it present a front so utterly degraded that the impertinent may presume to take liberties with its dormant dignity; since, however often forgetting that it is divine, it can never consent to be less than human. When an outrageous acrobat plays a happy-go-lucky game of pitch-and-toss with a frame coined, we are assured, in God's majestic mint, the public, though fascinated into evanescent applause, returning to

the simple walks of every-day occupation, are far too mindful of its value not to condemn. But this poor offensive rope-walker has the excuse that he risks his own body in order to maintain the bodies of others ; whilst they who, satirized in "The Season," outrage by "their fantastic tricks" the dignity of humanity, have not even the insufficient plea of an empty purse. All that they can appeal to for their justification is a shallow heart or a vacant brain.

This it was, I conceived, that stood—that stands yet—in such imperative need of alteration. All I have attempted has been to make people see it—not such as it strives to seem, but—such as it really is: to see it, not through the delicious dreamy atmosphere of

gauze, but with this wanton bewildering gauze torn pitilessly off. Is a *reductio ad absurdum* illegitimate in verse? "Les Amours de Diane," says the Covent Garden play-bill. No! say I: "Salvioni's legs." The phraseology of the play-bill is elegant, but it is a sham, a blind —out with it!—a lie. My phraseology is startling and unpleasant, but—true. Call a spectacle by the classical and abstract title of "Diana's loves," and who shall not go and have a look at it? But call this same spectacle by the name I have given it—its real name, mind you,—and who is going—I will not say, as some folks say, to take these little ones, but—who is going at all? This I said in "The Season;" this I say again;

to this I appeal as my complete justification.

To be colloquial, but laconic: "Here," I say, "is a disease, a death-bringing wind, and its name is Scirocco." "Not a bit of it," I get for answer; "it is no disease, no killing blast, but a pleasant holiday breeze, and its true appellation, if you want to know, is Zephyrus, or the West Wind." Turning about to get this matter solved, what reply do I receive? Why, this: "Well, well, it *is* the scirocco, but for God's sake" (for GOD'S sake!) "don't say so: it is an ugly word, and it frightens folks, and you had better call it West Wind too."

Now, I will *not* call it West Wind. I have a much fiercer objection to ugly things than

to ugly words; and if I can but frighten some people into an honest recognition of what they are doing, even a more brutal charge than that of "ingrained depravity" will not disturb me from my charitable mission.

Between facts and their forms, between reality and appearance, between behaviour and language, there is at present woeful estrangement. Most people are trying hard to stretch the estrangement into a permanent divorce; and neither by the gentle appeals of the mistaken, the sneers of the indolent, nor the monotonous vocabulary of the interested, will I be balked of my purpose to bring about something like a reconciliation. I have said nothing new: I have said what has been said by hun-

dreds of others; only, I have said it differently. But of all those who have said it, I verily believe I am about the first who has ever got himself listened to. Had I written with the grave decorum of a secluded moralist, I too should have gone down to the limbo of forgotten bores.

This last word provokes me into pausing. I have much to say upon this matter, but will refrain from saying more upon it here. I am very young to teach, so will fortify my position with a grave quotation from an Elder. It is a Father of the Church,—if my memory serve me with fidelity, it is St Jerome,—who says, "If an offence come of the Truth, better the offence come than the

Truth be concealed." Offence has come of "The Season;" but if, as I believe, Truth, practically concealed, have through it obtained some slight recognition, authorised by St Jerome, I claim for myself a proportionate absolution.

Some words I have altered: some lines I have expunged: not (I must be honest) from conviction, but from deference. I am not virtuous enough altogether to resist the perplexing arguments of a gentle hand, nor the convincing sophistry of a musical human voice. Thanks, unutterable thanks, to all such persuasive critics, even if they have led me astray! From the general life, from the promiscuous struggle, in which, it would appear, the pur-

poses of the Great Arrangement can be attained only by each one's hitting hard and being hard hit back in turn, how pleasant and surely how profitable is it to seek in the individual life for the pathetic courtesies of affectionate disagreement. There, without weakening our healthy animosity against what we conceive to be wrong, we can lovingly congregate with those who conceive it to be eternally right: there, though ready at the summons to strike, armour-buckled, in the behoof of Man, we are forced to acknowledge that men also have their claim: there, getting our gaping wounds bound up, we confess that our necessities are human, if our aspirations are divine.

Must I apologise for this garrulous egotism?

There are many whom I wished to address, and for my life I could not have spoken to them what, consequently, I have written here.

23*d June* 1861.

"The diseases of society can, no more than corporal maladies, be prevented or cured without being spoken about in plain language."—JOHN STUART MILL, *Principles of Political Economy.*

THE SEASON.

In honest times, when purer manners reigned,
And Virtue never save by Vice was pained,
The Poet's pen might flagrant scandals call
By manly names, the property of all,
And, like the prophets bold of Sacred Writ,
Discard the sleight of circumambient wit.
Now, so corruptly chaste our ways are grown,
E'en words, turned wanton,[a] must, in prurient tone,

[a] Very opportunely, the other day, I stumbled on a letter written by Miss Mary Pierrepoint, afterwards, as all the world knows, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, to

Tickle our ears, or public Censure preach
With euphemistic mincingness of speech.

Why then so rash and bluntly spoken, pray?
Heaven save the mark! a Satire! and to-day!
The World, grown tolerant, endures no more
Minstrels that deign to stoop, or dare to soar.[b]

Mrs Hewet, an extract from which is much to my purpose. Here is what one lady writes to another lady:—"I was last Thursday at the new Opera, and saw Nicolini strangle a lion with great gallantry. But he represented nakedness so naturally, I was surprised to see those ladies stare at him without any confusion that pretend to be so violently shocked at a poor double entendre or two in a comedy, which convinced me that those persons who would cry 'Fie! fie!' at the *word* naked, have no scruple about the *thing*." Non meus *hic* sermo.

[b] "Not in Fancy's maze I wandered long,
But *stooped* to Truth, and moralised my song."
Byron said this was the only faulty line in the whole of Pope, who should have written "soared to Truth."

If you must needs be earnest, well, depict
What none concerns, so none will contradict.
Rhyme with the thunder, versify the wind,
Dethrone your God, and deify Mankind.
Sing the dim Spheres of blessedness or woe,
Sing all, sing any, save the one you know.
Shriek, start, pant, palpitate, pause, prove to men
There is some splendid purpose in your pen.
Convert your cut-throats; make your Phrynes chaste;
Flaunt moral diamonds; who will guess them paste?
Spurn bastard spondees, spuriously Greek;
With modern tawdry drape the grand antique.
Or write blank verse: it moveth more severe:
Proper your metre, if your views be queer;

Industriously labour languid lays,
Beloved of Courts, and snatch the Poet's bays!
Bees, swallows, wagtails, milk-and-water warm,
And all that *must* do far more good than harm,
Let themes like these monopolize your force,
And leave sins, men, and women to the coarse.[c]

[c] Frankness requires that I should own that the epithet "coarse" has been applied to some of the lines in "The Season" by more than one critic. Mrs Barrett Browning provides me with a reply, in words more forcible than I can hope ever to write, at the 105th page of the fifth edition of "Aurora Leigh:"—

"Am I coarse?
Well, Love 's coarse, Nature 's coarse . . .
We fair, fine ladies, who park out our lives
From common sheep-paths, cannot help the crows
From flying over,—we 're as natural still
As Blowsalinda. Drape us perfectly
In Lyons velvet,—we are not, for that,
Lay-figures, look you: we have hearts within,

What! when the Pulpit decorates its blame,
And leaves the shameless free for fear of shame,
Genteelly prunes the rugged Pentateuch,
And smiles on rogues emasculate rebuke,
Makes matters pleasant with a hell disguised,[d]
And hawks about a Gospel compromised;

> Warm, live, improvident, indecent hearts,
> As ready for outrageous ends and acts
> As any distressed sempstress of them all."

If the discussion of one's species is to be tabooed,—if Pope was altogether in the wrong, and "the proper study of mankind is" *not* "man," let us know, by all means. But so long as the old doctrine stands, I and a few more of us intend to express our meaning in the simplest language we can get hold of, not being able "to cog like lisping hawthorn buds, that come like women in men's apparel."

[d] For fear of misinterpretation, I must avow my sympathy with Uncle Toby's sorrow ("I'm sorry for it," said Uncle Toby) at the announcement of the Devil being "damned long ago." But hell is not quite a place to be

When mighty scribes wax emulous, to lull
Uneasy dreamers and delude the dull,
Of suppurating sores that ulcerate
And draw the life-blood from the soundest State,
As "social evils" elegantly prate;
When jaunty moralists in periods trim,
Tricked out with every servile synonym,
Hint, but to hide, of poisons that infect
With subtle venom the uncircumspect,
Which, worming through the blameless and the best,
Blasts the poor babe, reliant, at the breast;

played with. If there be no such place at all, let us hear no more about it: but if there be, somebody will have to go there: and "somebody" had better be told of his prospects in the plainest language possible. One hears it said: "If the Devil does not get so-and-so, where is the use of keeping a Devil?" This at least is logical.

And when Society applauds this plot,
To make each thing appear the thing 'tis not;
Why should *you* rudely its repose invade
With sharp, short words, and call a spade a spade?—
Lift the light gauge which, accurately nice,
Divides Conventionality from Vice?
Offended foes will dog you till you die,
Who, if they cannot crush you, can belie!
Engaging prospect! to parade, the mark
Of each bruised mouth that slanders in the dark!

Thanks, my good friends! But I am young, and Youth
Owes nought to Fear, and everything to Truth.

Yet if some hand, more intimate than mine,
Would strip these shams, and wield the knotted line,
Invade the motley masquerading ranks,
And pluck the masks from tinsel mountebanks,
Some nervous Censor scramble to his feet,
Feel for his scourge, and terrify the cheat,
How gladly I such office would eschew,
To linger, comrades! indolent, with you!
I rather far, supine, would fling me where
Long lazy sedges loll against the air,
Or, drenched with perfume on Sorrento's side,
Invoke the quiet never there denied,
And, lost to crowds, in honeysuckled haunt,
Live, hidden hero of my own romaunt!

Yet even Solitude at times will leave
The blood no rest, the pulses no reprieve.
Beside a sunny rivulet aloof,
Yestreen, I seemed to hear this proud reproof:
O Boy! it urged, loiter not idly here,
Where I am only musical and clear.
Wake from your dreams, and come with me along,
And what I am in stream, be you in song!
I loved the hills where, tiny tarn, I lay
Screened from intrusion of the garish Day:
I loved their patient slopes whose outstretched arms
Saved me, too confident, from courted harms,
Guiding my steps uncertain, till they grew
Firmer and not so devious, then withdrew:

I loved the bright broad meadows where I played,
I loved the woodland's transitory shade:
I loved the lawns where bevies of fair girls,
Pure as their robes though frolic as their curls,
Tripped down from where along the trellised wall
They trained their plants, themselves out-blooming all,
Flowers o'er my pathway prodigally cast,
Coaxed me to stay but praised me as I passed.
Labour expects me on the banks below:
O lagging Boy! pursue me as I go!
Me many a solemn embassage awaits,
Me the swarmed concourse of impatient freights:
To me the palpitating cities call
To bear the benefits of each to all.

Limpid no more, I rush to court assoil,
Proud of the stains of decorating Toil,
Where splendid burthens dropping on my breast
Dismiss me blessing, and avouch me blest.
Onwards I go, to greet the whelming tide,
The sad supremacy of self denied,
Solicitous no more, since soon to be
One with the vague irrevocable Sea!

So sings the river through the summer days,
And I, submissive, follow what I praise.
What if my boyish blood would rather stay
Where lawns invite, where bonnibels delay,
Though but a youth and not averse from these,
To conflict called, I abdicate my ease,

Bend to some honest work before I go
And prove that verse can utilize its flow.

I sing the Season, Muse! whose sway extends
Where Hyde begins beyond where Tyburn ends:
Muse, not like vulgar Muses known and nude,
Who look the hoyden yet affect the prude,
But draped discreetly in a skirt and vest
Which just withhold the secrets they suggest:
Mistress avowed where'er Man's lofty brain
Invents fresh youth for beauty on the wane.
Muse, earth-begot! equipped from hip to heel
In loose array of penetrable steel:
Fashion yclept! without whose granted spell
No fair lips flatter, no effusions sell,

Accept my couplets ; make my strains select,
Parade each beauty, powder each defect ;
So that my lines, quick, sparkling as your eyes,
Storm the Town's Circles with a quick surprise !

Returning shadows now divide the street :
Free now the Mall from all but Party heat :
Gone the broad glare, save where with borrowed bays
Some female Phaëthon sets the drive ablaze ;
Or, more defiant, spurning frown and foe,
Rules with loose rein Anonyma[e] the Row.

[e] Social celebrity travels slowly. Hence fair readers, who reside wholly in the provinces, may be puzzled by this passage ; but to their Sisters of the Season, the Anonyma of the hour is as well known, and as much an object of interest, as the last shape of Madame Elise ; and the skill

Dear pretty fledgelings! come from country nest
To nibble, chirp, and flutter in the West,
Whose clear, fresh faces, with their fickle frown
And favour, start like Spring upon the Town:
Less dear, for damaged, damsels! doomed to wait,
Whose third — fourth? — season makes half desperate,
Welling with warmth, less potent hour by hour
(As magnets heated lose attractive power):
Or you! nor dear nor damsels, tough and tart
Unmarketable maidens of the mart,

with which, in talk *à deux*, they manœuvre the conversation into speculations upon her origin, abode, and doings, fully corroborates their claim to the possession of considerable tact, though it perhaps scarcely supports their reputation for delicacy of instinct.

Who, plumpness gone, fine delicacy feint,
And hide your sins in piety and paint;
Answer me, all! belle, heiress, flirt, and prue,
Who has our gaze? Anonyma or you?
"The nasty wretch! regard her saucy leer!"
Well, own her conquest, and I'll own it queer.

Withal, *not* queer . . . I am, I must insist,
A most uncompromising moralist.
Wit, frankness, beauty, natural quests of Man,
Provoke his instincts since the world began.
His fine, keen scent, evading social skill
To hedge him out, is sure to trespass still.
No barn-door game, by fluttering mothers reared,
Cooped up from dangers genuine or feared,

Whose wings are clipped to fortify control,
Afford the sport that satisfies the soul.
Is it a marvel Man's more liberal mood
Should beat the wilds where Nature rears her brood,
Along forbidden border forests roam,
Seeking the breeze he cannot find at home?
Go girls! to Church! believing all you hear,
Think that their lack of virtue makes them dear;
And heed not me who say that ban and bar
Make you the stupid, stunted things you are;
That both would dearer, happier, better be,
Had they your virtue, you their liberty.
But since restraint is privilege from blame,
And loss of fetters is a loss of fame,

Preferring freedom, these forego respect;
Repute *your* choice, you smart beneath neglect.
Alternative ordained by Moral Plan—
To pine, a doll, or smile, a Courtesan!

Incongruous group, they come: the judge's hack,
With knees as broken as its rider's back:
The counsel's courser, stumbling through the throng
With wind e'en shorter than its lord's is long:
The foreign marquis's accomplished colt,
Sharing its owner's tendency to bolt:
The —— nay, enough; let Cowper's[f] care attest
The worth and vast importance of the rest.

[f] The Right Hon. William Cowper, then First Com-

Rise, Britons! rise! ye patriot vestries! call
For monster meetings in St Martin's Hall!
James,[ε] to the rescue! shall the Board of Works
Treat sons of Hampden like Malays or Turks?
Pym! Magna Charta! Bill of Rights! Bow
wow!
You won our liberties; preserve them now!
Heavens! what a hubbub doth the Town divide!
A Revolution? No, a lengthened Ride.

missioner of Public Works, whose design to extend the delights of the Row, since carried out with certain modifications, worked the Tribunes of the People into a fit of phrensy.

ε The popular London M.P., and demagogue of the comparatively mild days that preceded the second Reform Bill, who afterwards left his country for his country's good. He has not been without successors, some of whom would do well to imitate him, at least in this last particular.

Oh! spare those Gardens where the leafy glade
Prompts the proposal dalliance delayed;
Where tear-dewed lids, choked utterance, sobs
suppressed,
Tear the confession from a doubting breast;
Whence they, who vainly haunted rout and ride,
Emerge triumphant by a suitor's side.

Come, let us back, and whilst the Park 's alive,
Lean o'er the railings and inspect the Drive.
Look! as we turn, most loved of all her Line,
If not by Right, by deeds at least divine,
By Nature's self equipped for kind command,
Onward she comes, the Lady of the Land!
Long may each zone its wealth profusely pour
Upon her laplike, peace-protected shore!

Long may the strain come swelling from the ships,
Which keeps Victoria on a Nation's lips!
Long, long in thousand eyes that smile be seen
Which thinks her woman, though it hails her Queen:
Queen, wife,[h] or mother, perfect in each part,
And throned securely in a People's heart!

Still sweeps the long procession, whose array
Gives to the lounger's gaze, as wanes the day,
Its rich reclining and reposeful forms,[i]
Still as bright sunsets after mists or storms,

[h] Alas! the word, indeed almost the whole of this passage, is already little more than historical.

"There is no armour against Fate,
Death lays his icy hand on Kings."

[i] An intelligent Peruvian, whom I once took into Hyde

Who sit and smile (their morning wranglings
o'er,
Or dragged and dawdled through one dull day
more),
As though the life of widow, wife, and girl
Were one long lapsing and voluptuous whirl.
O poor pretence! what eyes so blind but see
The sad, however elegant, ennui?
Think you that blazoned panel, prancing pair,
Befool our vision to the weight they bear?

Park, expressed himself much shocked at the indolent attitudes of our maids and matrons *sans reproche:* yet he was a descendant of the very people whose shameless customs Locke, in his "Essay on the Human Understanding," quoting from Garcilaso de la Vega, adduces in order to prove that there are "no innate practical principles." The indignant criticism of the descendant of the Tououpinambos would seem to fortify Locke's theory, though by a retaliatory instance.

The softest ribbon, pink-lined parasol,
Screen not the woman, though they deck the doll.
The padded corsage and the well-matched hair,
Judicious jupon spreading out the spare,
Sleeves well designed false plumpness to impart,
Leave vacant still the hollows of the heart.
Is not our Lesbia lovely? In her soul
Lesbia is troubled: Lesbia hath a mole;
And all the splendour of that matchless neck
Consoles not Lesbia for its single speck.
Kate comes from Paris, and a wardrobe brings,
To which poor Edith's are "such common things."
Her pet lace shawl has grown not fit to wear,
And ruined Edith dresses in despair.

I fear there are who think my satire blind
To all defects except the softer kind.
Says saucy Maud: "You leave the men alone:
Is it because their meanness is your own?"
Perhaps. But tell me: will you drop a hint
About your sisters I may seize and print?
Would you to me the mysteries disclose
Of Sophie's boudoir, diary of Rose?
Or—ha! you start!—your own arcana tell,
Gods! how my verses would surprise and sell!
But no: whilst men alarmedly declare
"He hits too hard—it really is not fair"—
You, they think hit, are laughing in your sleeves:
"He thinks he knows." Well, honour among thieves.

So, though I own that even men have specks,
Like you, I spare the secrets of my sex.
Still, by severe induction may we guess,
If yours are great, our faults will scarce be less.

Besides: as Sex,[j] in embryotic state,
Is always female till a certain date,
So are our manly virtues, be assured,
But female vices only more matured.
And just as they, who, armed with lens and knife,
Seek in our frames the principle of life,

[j] This is a fact which the investigations of recent embryologists have made sufficiently certain. In the method of producing males, or sterile females, from the larvæ of bees, may be recognised an analogous, if not an exactly similar, occurrence. For a short but intelligible account,

Find that the embryo best assists their aim,
So have I found—my method is the same.
We best shall learn from fœtal forms; besides,
'Gainst forms developed Convenance decides.
Our Vicious Age shrinks, cognisant of blame,
From probing Manhood, with a sickly shame.
And yet how slight the contrast we admire!
Women's hearts smoulder—men's escape in fire.

You doubt it? Why, this moment, see a sign!
All go: but those to dress, whilst these to dine.
Divergence, think you? Be not duped: their aim,
In seeming diverse, is in substance same.

the reader may consult that popular work, the "Vestiges of Creation."

Cribbed and confined, both need some sensuous
sport;
The one for praise, the others hunt for port.
And all must own that neither act their best
Till the half-drunk lean over the half-dressed.

O blesséd moment! . . . Duns! Detractors!
Fate!
Hit me your hardest—but I dine* at eight.
My thoughts are stolen? half my verses halt?
Well, very likely: please to pass the salt.
Jones won't accept your bills: he funks the
risk.
Does he? What matter? *Potage à la bisque!*

* "Qu'on me méprise, pourvu que je dine!" was the exclamation of one of the sensualists of A.D. 1789.

You recollect what Titus used to say?
Did Titus dine, he could not lose a day.
Whilst kindly Plutus ransacks all the Rhine
To line his bins, then makes them yours and mine,
Would you be rich so long as you are young
And own a ready appetite and tongue?
I bring my hat, my anecdote, my laugh,
And need but kindly criticise and quaff,
Plutus repays my frequent presence here
With grasp unchanging, ever-changing cheer.
Long may the Gods preserve my palate clean
To do due justice to his deft cuisine!
And, O kind, compensating Time! increase
My purse and cellar as my youth you fleece;
So that, a seasonable change at most,
The slender guest may smile the portly host.

And when, dear boys! Life's Vintage slightly sours,
With taste discreet and temper wholly ours,
Not even Death is able to deprave,
Invert the wine-cup o'er a gourmet's grave!

Why, Life itself a dinner is indeed,
Where each contributes so that all may feed.
We all give something: some give more, some less;
None are excluded from the social mess:
And he who finds the bread or beverage sour,
Should send us better or should cease to lour.
I hate your churls who strut, and sulk, and swear
Go where they will they ever foully fare.

Believe me, friend! you'll always find that such
Provide but little who exact so much.
Your true cosmopolite, Life's well-bred guest,
Scorns not plain dishes, though he serves the best;
And should there hap disaster, even dearth,
Mends the misfortune or the want with mirth.
Does not, when some rude grumbler mars the rout,
Instinctive justice mutter "Turn him out"?
Would we were rid of all whose gall deflowers
Their own existence and would poison ours!

But—the clock strikes: the carriage waits: be trite.
Pocchini dances, Titiens sings, to-night.

Sure, you mistake? For Lumley promise made
Of voice not heard, limbs never yet displayed.
Better and better. Sharp's the word. The tier?
The first, of course—the best for eye and ear.
Gods! what a show! Right, left, the House is crammed:
Our new danseuse won't, here at least, be damned.
Above, around, below, are houris' eyes,
Flashing with quick, intelligent surprise,
And houris' blushes rapidly respond
To murmurous whispers deftly-dropped and fond,
Spread from the temples, eddy to the neck,
Break on the breast, and, turning at the check,
In ripples weaker rally from restraint,
Creep up the cheek and on the features faint.

Their rounded, pliant, silent-straying arms
Seem sent to guard, yet manifest their charms.
Mark how the lorgnettes cautiously they raise
Lest points, no pose so thoughtless but dis-
plays,
A too quick curiosity should hide—
For they who gaze must gazed at be beside.
Now, o'er the box their beauteous busts they
bend,
A foe to welcome, criticise a friend,
Unfolding or obscuring charms at will
With all the calm unconsciousness of skill,
Solving the doubt that sometimes will arise—
Whilst women wantons are, can men be wise?
Let your eyes stray from sensuous row to row
Of nude parade, and flash an honest no!

What can be Man's, the while 'tis Woman's part
To bare her bosom and to hide her heart?

Hush! pretty prattlers! Waving arms apart,
Æolus frees the fettered winds of Art.
Be dumb, ye triflers! whilst his spells con-found[1]
The gathered—scattered—symphonies of sound.
Cymbals barbaric clang; cowed flutes complain
As the sharp, cruel clarion cleaves the strain:
To drum deaf-bowelled, drowning sob and wail,
Scared viols shriek, that pity may prevail;

[1] For the benefit of literal people, I annex the primary meaning of Confundere; viz., to unite, mingle, combine. —"Riddle's Lat.-Eng. Dictionary."

Till, with tumultuous purpose, swift and strong,
Sweeps the harmonious hurricane of Song!

The curtain lifts. Behold the "Lost One"[m] lain
'Mid all the woes of suitors and champagne:
Of the whole crowd the cynosure and queen,
The best-dressed woman in this sumptuous scene.
Wit — beauty — bearing — graciousness — respect,
Gifts few possess and none can quite affect;

[m] The story of "La Traviata" is too well known to require further reference than what is made to it in the text. That the reference therein is faithful, may be tested by a glance at the Argument prefixed to the English version of the libretto, which epitomises the Lost One's history.

Not wife, yet woman—hurt, but not debased—
If vain, unselfish—modest, if not chaste ;
Wealth, worship, fashion, prostrate at her feet,
Yet fled with Alfred to profound retreat—
For him the World abandoned quite, again
For him endured the pantomime of men—
Her life's one chance, one yearning, straight foregone,
To save the father, sister, in the son—
Wronged, as can wrong alone a lover's skill,
For her fidelity, yet faithful still—
Doomed by disease which modifies, not mars,
Dying like light in some transparent vase—
At last in Alfred's penitent embrace,
Held to his heart and fondled to his face—

Clinging to life, but with untroubled tone
Claiming the Heaven of Virgins for her own—"
Behold, exaggerated not, nor glozed,
The vocal Drama but this instant closed!
Hark! how fresh plaudits plaudits fresh repeat,
And purest posies kiss the "Lost One's" feet!

Do I complain our maidens should acquire
Her story? Ah! I nought could more desire
Than they should know, and, knowing, should reclaim
At once their sex, their sisters, and their shame.

" In the last scene, Violetta, made acquainted with her certain fate, exclaims in agony: "Great God! to die so young!" But, submitting to the inevitable, she gives Alfred a portrait of herself, for the benefit of some future wife, whom he is to tell "that she who gave it thee, 'midst the Saints in Heaven, prays for her and thee."

But by what moral or dramatic laws
Bare you the consequence, but veil the cause?
Vicious results prompt vice, beheld alone:
Let all be hidden or let all be known.
The henbane's petals poison whom they lure;
Pluck you but deeper, at the root is cure.
Whom noble still in infamy we saw,
In frailty faithful, fair despite her flaw,
Why was this woman with the world at strife,
Nor maid revered, nor consecrated wife?
Why the song silent on the only part
Of her career that might instruct the heart?
Because the story of her early years
Were sure to stir (beyond those surface tears

Which straightway dry beneath to-morrow's drought)
A fertile pity and an active thought.
And thus the partial Drama you applaud
Becomes mere flaunting falsity and fraud.
What is the spell that 'twixt a saint and sinner
The diff'rence makes? a sermon? bah! a dinner.
The odds and ends our silken Claras waste,
Would keep our calico Clarissas chaste.
Celia! the lace from off your parasol
Had held Celinda's sunburnt virtue whole:
A hundred pounds would coy have made the nude,
A thousand pounds the prostitute a prude,
And little more expenditure of pelf
Fanny a bigot bitter as yourself!

Hence! flimsy sophists! who with fasts and cries
Would fain compel Omniscience to be wise!
What if, instead of craving sun or rain,
You built a reservoir or delved a drain?
Instead of looks and platitudes demure,
Diffused the wealth that keeps peers' daughters pure?
Justly the stalwart pauper's prayers you spurn,
Yet whine in turn for wage yourselves might earn.
There is nor tempest, torrent, heat, nor wind,
Which is not big with blessings to mankind;
And each fomenting passion in the breast
Might add to life a sparkle and a zest.
Yet those you let scorch, shatter, and deflower,
And these but make existence flat and sour!

Blaspheming fools! with shrieks the skies you rend
Against the very benefits they send;
And howl to God, Who meant you for divine,
For grace to sink your species into swine!
This earth is man's: not God's, except as man's:
And man's the action in it that He plans.
True to His scheme, He never intervenes;
The end being human, human are the means.
What is man's end? To know and to be free.[o]
Think you to compass it by tracts and tea?
Labour[p] is prayer—the only prayer that serves—
And all beyond it but disordered nerves.

[o] "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—*St Paul.*

[p] "Qui laborat, orat:" is one of the oldest aphorisms of the Catholic Church.

E'en the Creator paused not till He could
Feel His work done, and saw that it was good.
Then did He rest. Your work done, so may you :
But "days of rest," whilst work remains to do!
The hungry feed: the thirsty treat as kin;
The naked clothe, and take the stranger in;
Visit the sick, the prison-house, the slum;
And then, "ye blessed of my Father, come!"
Oh! when shall Toil assert its proper price,
At once prayer, fasting, alms, and sacrifice?
And Men the workers proffer, as they plod,
A jubilation and a hymn to God?

Truce to this moral thunder: for advance
Fleet-footed laurelled Daphnes[9] of the Dance.

[9] *Daphne*, a maiden loved and pursued by Apollo; and

What first but vaguely Opera designs,
The Ballet next developes and defines.
The sentimental to the sensuous grows,
And pointless trilling into pointed toes.
Now wake the fathers who securely slept
Whilst Alfred wooed and Violetta wept,
Rub up their spectacles and strain their gaze
At bounding Zina dressed in shoes and stays.
Now love-struck boys transfer their fickle eyes
From Mary's trinkets to Morlacchi's thighs;
Whilst mothers, sisters, sweethearts, wives, applaud
The tight proportions of a twirling bawd.

when overtaken by the erotic Song-god, tantalisingly transformed into a laurel.

Must we then stop it? no: unleash the Town
To hunt a Nicholson or Warton down;[r]
The scent will take, the Cider Cellars close,
And Haddo,[s] hoodwinked, not insist on hose.
Thus, with the prudent chastity of clique,
Protect the Ballet 'gainst the Poses Plastiques.

Whilst we, surveying this decorous stage,
Admire the pastimes of a modest age,

[r] *Nicholson—Warton.*—Caterers for the taste of what my hairdresser calls "the lower orders of people what exist." The owners of Walhallas, Rainbow Nymphs, Days of Rhodes Revived, &c.

[s] Lord Haddo, now Earl of Aberdeen, has made violent efforts in the House of Commons to put a stop to the use of nude models in Schools of Art. I hope that I do not wrong his lordship in concluding that he extends his moral indignation to the nude, when exhibited before a larger and more public assemblage.

An errant curiosity inquires
Whither the Drama, England's boast, retires.
Let bounding profligates their limbs display
Where "further off" [t] chaste Hermia's lover "lay."
Let figuranti trip where Siddons stepped,
And jugglers [u] grin where once Macready wept;

[t] SCENE—*A wood near Athens.*

Hermia. But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
LIE FURTHER OFF; in human modesty
Such separation, as may well be said,
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,
So far be distant; and good-night, sweet friend;
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!
Lysander. Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I;
And then end life, when I end loyalty.
[*They sleep.*
—*Midsummer Night's Dream.*

[u] By "jugglers," I refer to the Chinese who delighted crowded houses by innocuously flinging knives at each other's heads.

Yet High Art surely somewhere makes a stand.

Somewhere! Well, where? in Wych Street or the Strand?

Is it where saucy Wilton[v] winks her way,

And says the more the less she has to say?

Is it where Robson,[w] servile to the Town,

Discards the Actor and adopts the Clown?

[v] Miss Marie Wilton is in every way charming, and can act only in those parts which are written for her; and it is no fault—but rather a talent—of hers, that she creates a more lively sensation when she is not speaking than when she is.

Little as our theatrical matters have changed since the above lines and note were written, Miss Marie Wilton at least has found a suitable outlet for her graceful abilities in Mr Robertson's Comedies, which are in turn indebted for much of their success to her intelligent management.—*Note to present Edition.*

[w] The great—the only—*tragic* actor we have: who, as Mazeppa, lies in tights on a bare-backed steed stuffed with

Where Toole or Compton, perfect in his part,
Touches each sense except the head and heart?
Where mobs "recal" the wit of Rogers' wig,
Applaud a pun and recompense a jig?
Seek where you will, you still will fail to find
More than a grinning, mountebank mankind.
Conscious of paltry purpose or of none,
No pride in winning, peace in having won;
Craving a respite from pursuit of pelf,
Our age in shows seeks shelter from itself.*
It strains at mirth, but like abandoned Boy
Debauched by sports that shatter whom they cloy,
Has lost its healthy appetite for joy:

straw, and requests a hungry vulture of the same material to "keep up his pecker."

* "Il faut des spectacles dans les grandes villes, et des romans aux peuples corrompus."—*Jean Jacques Rousseau.*

And yet too slothful to arise and scan
The splendid toils allotted to the Man,
Toys with remorse, and as supine it lies,
"Oh give me back my youth!" unblushing cries.

Put out the lights: rub off the paint: the Play,
Sir, is performed; your carriage stops the way.
Well, then, good-night: the morn will soon be up:
You go to slumber? No! I go to sup.
Bah! I forgot. First Hansom! double fare!
Drive fast as Fate to 50 Belgrave Square.[y]

[y] One of my (I have many) literal friends comes and asks me, "Why 50 Belgrave Square?" And when I

Botanic Shows, where crowds and tactics tear
Too yielding daughters from a mother's chair:
Water excursions, when full boats divide
Some pretty novice from a sister's side;
Or Garden Fêtes where skilled duennas lose
Some precious charge that with like skill pursues;
To these be honour; but the Ball—the Ball—
Combines, continues, and excels them all.
Here, with complacency, strict matrons see
Maids and Moss-troopers[z] polking, knee to knee.
Their kindly gaze examines and exalts
The closer contact of the chaster waltz.

answer, "Because there are only *forty-nine* numbers," he goes away, offended at my rudeness.

[z] "Free Lances" is a recognised pseudonym. Surely, "Moss-troopers" rings more like home coinage.

Look where they smile, the grey-haired guardians set

To scout decorum, sanction etiquette.[a]

[a] I find by my *Spectator*, that matters were not much better a hundred and fifty years ago; for on the 17th day of May A.D. 1711, the following complaint is laid before him by one who says that he "is not yet old enough to be a fool":—

"I was amazed to see my girl handled by and handling young fellows with so much familiarity; and I could not have thought it had been in the child. They very often made use of a most impudent and lascivious step, called 'setting,' which I know not how to describe to you, but by telling you that it is the very reverse of 'back to back.' At last an impudent young dog bid the fiddlers play a dance called 'Moll Pately,' and after having made two or three capers, ran to his partner, locked his arms in hers, and whisked her round cleverly above ground in such a manner that I, who sat upon one of the lowest benches, saw further above her shoe than I could think fit to acquaint you with. I could no longer endure these enormities; wherefore, just as my girl was going to be made a whirligig, I ran in, seized on the child, and carried her home."

Louder, ye viols! shrilly, cornets! blow!
Who is this prophet that denounces woe?
Whirl fast! whirl long! ye gallants and ye girls!
Cling closer still; dance down these cursëd churls.
Be crowned, ye fair! with poppies newly-blown,
Fling loose your tresses, and relax your zone!
From floating gauze let dreamy perfumes rise,
Infuse a fiercer fervour in your eyes!
Till, head and heart and senses all on fire,
Passion presume and Modesty expire!

Bless us and save us! What tirade is this?
My choleric friend! is anything amiss?
This sparkling scene of Beauty in its bloom
Is not an Orgy, but——an auction-room.

These panting damsels, dancing for their lives,
Are only maidens waltzing into wives.
Those smiling matrons are appraisers sly,
Who regulate the dance, the squeeze, the sigh,
And each base cheapening buyer having chid,
Knock down their daughters to the noblest bid.

An honest time there was, when girl and boy
Might love and yet not jeopardize their joy:
When, in faint laughs were fainter whispers drowned,
Yet was no ill suspected in the sound.
'Chance, did they stray to sit and smile apart,
No frowns arraigned their vagrancy of heart.
No jealous frames, no artificial fires,
Forced on their growth, and hurried their desires;

Their graceful fondness gradually grew,
By thirst of absence, by reunion's dew;
Cheered by the sun, or saddened by the shower,
On each it throve, and fretted into flower.
Not e'en a parent prematurely pressed
The yet young secret from a basking breast;
Ripened by outer warmth, by inner sap,
It fell, spontaneous, in a mother's lap.
"You do not blame us, mother? will not part?
'Tis not to-day I give him up my heart:
He stepped across its threshold long before,
And is its household god for evermore."
Could he scarce yet sustain a husband's charge
(His fortune narrow, though his love was large),
He was not exiled by a venal Fate:
A boy might work, a maiden sure might wait.

Love mingled with the grave concerns of Life,
Tempered the toil and sanctified the strife.
No danger difficult, no hardship hard,
Risked for the promise of that rich reward.
It made his dullest drudgery divine,
To think, "My darling shall at last be mine!"
While she could feel she helped him in his part,
Upheld his purpose, purified his heart.
Till, aims accomplished, youth's brisk battle won,
They rushed together, mystic Two-in-One.

How is it now? Morality's advance
Demands for Love the strictest surveillance.
We banish with the glare of vulgar eyes
The lights and shadows of Love's coy disguise.

Rude ears invade—(Propriety insists)—
Her would-be secret, solitary lists;
Spoil all her tender tournay; put to rout
Those skilful skirmishers the heart sends out
In boldly-cautious converse, to make known
Another's weakness, but to screen its own.
No sweet lane-loiterings, no twilight strolls,
Induce the gradual intercourse of souls.
Two Balls—three Dinners—one Botanic Fête—
"You mean to try the matrimonial state?
Sir, your intentions? Marry, or depart;
You must not trifle with my daughter's heart."
"I did intend, but—truth to tell—as yet
My means are——" "Hold! you mean you are in debt.

You 're much mistaken, let me tell you,
sir !
If you conceive you 'll ever marry *her*."
He goes : consoles himself as best he can :
And she ? she marries money and a man.
A female and no fortune—'tis but just ;
So Love is nought save luxury and lust.
Hard words ? hard laws. The words have
been revised :
There are some sores which must be
cauterised.

Just as unskilled equestrians restrain
All healthful action, but give vice the rein,
So do these social laws unwisely err,
They check the angel but the demon spur,

Making e'en kindly courtesies a curse,
Manners no better and our morals worse.

You knew Blanche Darley? could we but once more
Behold that belle and pet of '54!
Not e'en a whisper, vagrant up to Town
From hunt or race-ball, augured her renown.
Far in the wolds sequestered life she led,
Fair and unfettered as the fawn she fed:
Caressed the calves, coquetted with the colts,
Bestowed much tenderness on turkey poults:
Bullied the huge ungainly bloodhound pup,
Tiffed with the terrier, coaxed to make it up:
The farmers quizzed about the ruined crops,
The fall of barley, and the rise of hops:

Gave their wives counsel, but gave flannel too,
Present where'er was timely deed to do;
Known, loved, applauded, prayed for far and wide—
The wandering sunshine of the country side.
So soft her tread, no nautilus that skims
With sail more silent than her liquid limbs.
Her hair so golden that, did slanting eve
With a stray curl its sunlight interweave,
Smit with surprise, you gazed but could not guess
Which the warm sunbeam, which the warmer tress.
Her presence was low music: when she went,
She left behind a dreamy discontent,
As sad as silence when a song is spent.

She came—we saw—were conquered: one and all,
We donned the fetters of delicious thrall.
We fetched, we carried, waited, doffed, and did
Just as our Blanche the beautiful would bid.
Such crowds petitioned her at every ball
For "just one waltz," she scarce could dance at all!
Her card besieged with such intrigues and sighs,
It might have been the pass-book to the skies.
We lost our heads. Have women wiser grown?
A marvel surely, had she kept her own.

But brief our madness. Had we heard the news?
Vaux has proposed. Vaux! reeking from the stews!

That remnant, Vaux! shrunk, tottering, palsied,
wan!
An Earl by right, by courtesy a man.
That soldier-sycophant, with seam and scar
Gashed deep, but not in battle's joyful jar!
He with the cannon's never blent his breath,
Nor gaily galloped up the gaps of death.
Too rich to roam, in bloodless fields and fights
A lie at Brooks's, black-ball drops at White's.
Senilely supple if you lure or warn,
Now prowls the Quadrant, now confers with
Kahn.

Romantic boys! be still. Will angry names
Like "battered beast" annul an Earldom's
claims?

Life is not wholly sentiment and stars:
Venus wed Mercury as well as Mars.
Hush your lewd tattle! seek your slighted beds!
A cornet waltzes, but a colonel weds.
The Countess comes. Before her marriage vow,
Only men praised her: women praise her now.
See what avail a carriage and pair!
You lose a lover, but—you gain a stair.
The world, to kindly compensation prone,
Gives you its honour when you lose your own.
Corrupt in heart, in head-dress if correct,
Our well-bred race rewards you with respect.
Who more respected than my Lady Vaux?
The Town collects and wonders as she walks.
What if the Earl be absent from her side,
Whilst others near it? Gouty Earls must ride.

Let those, whose line but yesterday began,
Crave for the coarse capacities of man ;
Vaux gave his wealth, his peerage, Blanche her face—
Your vulgar wants invade not Chesham Place.
Is it so sad to have one's husband old ?
The mother's milk but mars the maiden's mould ;
And Blanche, whilst fruitful spouses fade so fast,
Shall bear her barren beauty to the last !

What ! . . . So they say . . . Bah ! Nonsense . . .
But it's true :
True, sure enough—will lay you ten to two.

Jack saw the brief, Respondent's name endorsed. . . .
Great God in heaven! Our Blanche to be divorced!

O scalding shame! that name, last season's toast,
Is never mentioned, or is mourned at most;
Save where lewd lawyers, on their benches perched,
In joke obscene send round the name that's smirched;
Or, fouler still, amidst lascivious roar,
The Coal Hole[b] travesties one trial more!

[b] In the "Coal Hole" is or was held a Court of Law, under the presidency of Baron Nicholson, with the avowed occupation of parodying celebrated Matrimonial Causes.

But what of Frank? to whom she early gave
Her love, that guardian-angel sent to save;
To whose kind counsels would we list alone,
We ne'er should dash our foot against a stone.
A simpler, manlier bosom never throbbed
Than that poor boy's, whom fashion foully robbed.
In camps begot, his earliest desire
Turned to the sabre of his slaughtered sire.
But Peace, oppressive Peace, becalmed the world;
Fluttered no pennon, not a wave was curled.
When would War's lances tear the welkin dun?
When battle's bugles summon up the sun?
The barrack life in stagnant country town,
The bootless charge o'er undefended down,

He chafed at all—court-martial, march, parade,
And almost cursed the choice himself had made.

He met with Blanche. Complaint began to cease.
Who knows? Her smile might compensate for Peace.
He was too poor to prate as one that woos,
But not—who is?—too poor to love and lose.
That devil Circumstance, who smooths the way
To those who "may not," blocks to those who "may,"
Threw them together: wheresoe'er they went,
They met as though by purposed accident.
A pettish parting by a wicker gate
Unsealed their secret, but to seal their fate.

He called her back: she turned on him her eyes
With a most swift significant surprise,
Gazed straight into his soul, that moment bare,
And saw her own bright image trembling there;
But in that gaze unmasked she to his view
Eyes which, though piercing his, reflected too!

Did they not part? Ah! lips, which once have kissed,
Are impotent to reason or resist.
Who ne'er was tempted knows not how to teach,
And he who falls will soon forget to preach.
The Scribe may scowl, the Pharisee may chide—
But they will pardon who have once been tried.

Yet did they part. When Europe's wild alarms
Tore him from hers to Conflict's sterner arms,
And proud fair England gave her boys to guard
From Tartar maw what Turkish lust hath marred,
Joyful he went: ere long he would return
Whom most would sigh for, none besought would spurn.
The foe-fleshed hand, the decorated brow,
Might seize the spoil they dared not sue for, now.

In the Light Charge the gallant won his spurs,
And prized his laurels, since his laurels hers.

Now might he write, and with unchallenged
claim
Fling at her feet the fulness of his fame.
I saw that bright broad face shrink cold and
hard:
Blanche Darley's answer—Lady Vaux's card!

A first babe draining a young mother's breast,
A little maid by father's hand caressed,
Are not more pure, more sacred to the wise,
Than hapless Love in Courtesy's disguise.

How courteous he! A smile, a look, from
Blanche
Swayed him as breeze a young lithe willow
branch.

Yet none could guess, save those alone who knew,
What flogged-down fondness whined and
crouched from view.
No longer love, but worship, warped his mind;
He held her holy—worship made him blind.
He did not see, what others saw and scanned,
A rich prize ready for the boldest hand;
Or seeing, spared the Fruit of Good-and-Ill,
With Her to dwell within his Eden still;
Perchance not jealous now that man and wife,
Plucking, had proved the nakedness of life.
Oh, what a dawn, when first he waked to own
He walked his fond Fool's Paradise—alone!

He who, despite his sorely baffled aim,
Survived his loss, could not survive her shame.

In those vast lands first fastened-on by fraud,
And since by clanking sabres overawed,
Rebellion brake like storm-clouds in the night!
He asked a sword, and hurried to the fight;
Rang out the war-cry with his Spartan wont—
"Cravens to rear! rough-riders to the front!"
Stern to the last, stemmed the barbarian tide;
And if unconquering, unconquered died.

But Blanche? Oh! surely the unblemished
snow
Was not more —— Hush! Enough for you
to know
That she, who once such curt refusal gave
To share Frank's bed, would gladly share his
grave.

Darkness retreats, its misty banners furled;
The Sun's couched lances scour along the world.
Skulk to your beds, ye Bacchanals of Night!
The Day stalks in and stares upon your rite.
On wine-stains, crumpled wreaths, and clammy lips,
And eyes bedimmed with surfeit's foul eclipse,
On cheeks where roses blown have ceased to smile,
Or stay to show how false they were the while,
On slattern hair, whose short thin wisps make known
How much of former fulness was its own,
On broken fans and irritated corns,
Brows steeped in sweat that earns not nor adorns:

Away! away! let sleep—such sleep as lies
On Fashion's fagged yet feverish votaries—
With lurements fresh to-morrow's limbs invest,
And friendly paint and padding do the rest.[c]

Why further follow flogging Fashion's faults?
The Muse will flag, but Folly never halts.
Write as I will, the rivalry of men
Invents new vice to paralyse my pen.
From class to class the mummery descends:
I seek in vain for contrast or for friends.
All ranks to equal turpitude aspire;
Those make the mode, these mimic in the mire.

[c] Written with whatever dissimilar meaning, the lines of Ovid upon Echo may, without strain, be applied to the disordered figures of three o'clock in the morning.

"Et neque jam color est misto candore rubori;
Nec vigor, et vires, et quæ modo visa placebant;
Nec corpus remanet."

See salon morals vagrant on the flags,
Vice's torn tawdry shown as Virtue's rags,
Pure, simple Woman, brazen, scented, curled,
And God-like Man, the clothes-horse of the world!

Who think by verse to better make the bad,
I grant it freely, must be vain or mad.
From Horace downward, monitory rhymes
Have but amused, and mended not the times.
Yet in an Age when each one deftly hides
The scorn he feels for every one besides,
I claim the precious privilege of youth,
Never to speak except to speak the truth.
Urge you that youth should ne'er presume to scold,
Since Satire suits the wise alone, and old,

Ah! age is not invariably nice,
And wisdom oft grows lenient to vice.
Besides, much more impartially the boy
May scowl at sports himself could yet enjoy.
Perchance should impotent repentant rake
Denounce the havoc he no more can make,
Dyspeptic pauper against feasts protest
His purse can't reach, his stomach can't digest,
Or paralytic moralists condemn
The lips that now no longer lust for *them*,
Would you not say the fable of the grapes
Fitted these censors in their sober shapes?
Not rich nor beggared, blasé nor a child,
By Folly's ways instructed, not beguiled,
A guest sometimes where wit and mirth abound,
And yet, thank God! my head and stomach sound,

Life still careering freely in my veins,
And kindly smiles best guerdon of my pains,
By none befooled, I abdicate my age
To lash the pastimes which my peers engage.

Let purists frowning at my verse pretend
To mourn the means and not to see the end,
Deny the sore, so deprecate the knife—
But as our ballet, so our social life.
Whilst quite enough is deftly bared to sight
To lend to lust a lecherous delight,
As deftly too is just so much obscure
As makes the good (but timid) half endure.
Strip off this insincerity of gauze
Which balks the hiss and sanctions the applause.

Mayhap—and thither is my satire aimed—
When all is naked, some will feel ashamed.

Welcome release! The Season gasps and dies,
And Fashion's Crowd to sea-side quarters flies.
What though the Tide's uncompromising roar
Thunders its truths, terrific, on the shore,
Deaf to its voice, they only there prolong
The kill-time shifts recorded in my song.

Not them I follow: but that dear old beach
Will I seek out, where, far beyond the reach
Of flirts and flippants, will the faithful foam
Fawn at my feet and gambol round my home.
There shall I surely the great lesson learn,
To prize results, but recompense to spurn;

Since every breaker, how supreme soe'er
The wealth its individual bosom bear,
Impelled by no poor egotist desires,
To the community of waves retires
Wholly as undistinguished as before,
When it has cast its corals on the shore.

O blest Seclusion! heaven and earth combine
To blend their glories, and to make them thine!
For thee Spring dries her tears—those sweet alarms—
Conquers her coyness and unveils her charms.
For thee the harvest, decked by Autumn's hand,
Sways on the lap of the delighted land;

Just as—the day-toils over—you may see
A fair-haired frolic girl on some proud father's knee.
For thee, when Summer's festal day is done,
In gracious splendour goes away the Sun,
King with the purple glories round him furled,
Casting his farewell largesse o'er the world.
For thee the Moon on dark sequestered meres
Sheds the mild lustre of celestial spheres.
The spoiled and froward Ocean, all for thee,
Now coaxed to love, now fretting to be free,
With spume-fringed, scornful lip, and fierce delight,
Hurls back defiance to rebuking Night;
Then, wearied babe on hushing parent's breast,
On the soft sand-slope sobs itself to rest.

This is my wealth: and this, thank Heaven, is such
As Statesmen tax not, Envy cannot touch.
My life is spent where real charms delight,
Pure pastimes please, and simple joys excite,
Far from the vapid glee, the restless rage,
That jerks the puppets of your futile stage.
I fear no Angel's sword; no stern decree
Bars the broad plains of Paradise to me.
For me the Golden Gates stand open still;
I pass, and roam through Eden where I will.

FINIS.

Extract from a Review by M. E. D. FORQUES *of the Author's Works, in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," Sept. 15th,* 1865.

UN ROMANCIER SATIRIQUE DE LA GRANDE-BRETAGNE.

M. ALFRED AUSTIN.

PARMI les jeunes écrivains qui depuis trois ou quatre ans se sont fait un nom chez nos voisins d'outre-Manche, aucun n'est arrivé plus vite que M. Alfred Austin à ce résultat essentiel. Dès le premier pas, il était au but, c'est-à-dire, qu'il s'était fait connaître, et, ce qui ajoutait à l'étrangeté de cette bonne fortune exceptionnelle, c'est qu'il en était redevable à une simple fantaisie de poète. Les poètes ne sont pas de nos jours habitués à faire tant de bruit, et bon nombre d'entre eux accepteraient pour salaire de longs travaux cette renommée qu'un jeune satirique venait de conquérir en se présentant à ses contemporains, comme Louis XIV devant le parlement ébahi, l'éperon sonnant, la cravache haute, en homme de haute race égaré parmi des manans.

Il s'agissait tout simplement d'une satire, d'une satire de mœurs, et le scandale fut sans doute pour quelque chose dans le prompt éveil de la curiosité publique. Avouons que, sous ce rapport, bien des gens, parmi lesquels nous nous comptons à regret, durent être un peu désappointés. L'hyperbole poétique de M. Austin, dans ses licences les plus désordonnées, n'atteint pas, il s'en faut, aux cruautés du compte-rendu judiciaire. Le procès *de lunatico* intenté au jeune Wyndham, par exemple, celui qui nous révélait hier encore, dans la personne de Miss Cross, jusqu'où peuvent descendre les fantaisies conjugales d'une jeune personne bien née, portent avec eux des enseignemens

plus terribles et jettent sur le désordre moral des classes aristocratiques en Angleterre un jour tout autrement vif que le "fouet de feu" dont le nouveau Juvénal avait cru se servir. Cette *verge de feu* était tout simplement une cravache de *gentleman* maniée avec grâce et discrétion. Loin de cautériser la plaie saignante, elle laissait à peine quelques vestiges sur l'épiderme environnant, et si quelques vivacités malsonnantes,—supprimées à la seconde édition,—purent motiver cette accusation, "qu'en voulant souffleter le vice le poète avait fait rougir la vertu," somme toute, ces rougeurs ne durent naître que sur des joues virginales. En effet, les romanciers les plus accrédités dans leurs ouvrages les plus populaires,—Thackeray dans *Vanity Fair*, Dickens dans *Hard Times*, Bulwer lui-même dans mainte de ses fictions avaient abordé le même ordre d'idées, formulé des griefs beaucoup plus graves, et donné à leur blâme un relief au moins égal.

Sous un seul rapport, de pure forme, leur successeur se distinguait d'eux. Il avait pour lui un vers net, rapide, à l'accent byronien, rappelant tantôt Pope et tantôt Churchill, riche en antithèses et tout parfumé de classique ambroisie. On ne peut donc s'étonner que le poème intitulé *The Season* ait conquis du même coup les priviléges et subi les inconvéniens d'une incontestable notoriété.

A tout événement, il ne nous paraît ni prématuré, ni sans profit possible, de nous occuper avec quelque détail des tentatives de M. Austin comme poète et comme romancier. Le principal mérite de ces écrits satiriques est d'agiter des questions aujourd'hui pendantes, de répondre aux préoccupations contemporaines, de toucher à ce qui nous touche, et cela sous une forme toujours élégante, quelquefois exquise.—Le mérite secondaire est une sorte d'originalité cavalière,—peut-être plus affectée que réelle,—par laquelle ils tranchent sur le commun des productions que multiplie le jeu régulier de l'industrie appliquée aux œuvres de l'esprit. De là deux motifs, dont un seul suffirait à la rigueur, pour leur accorder quelque attention.

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